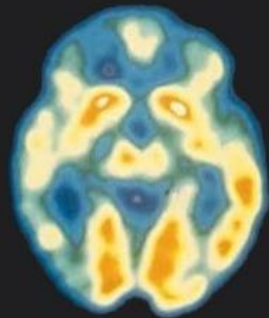


# CAREGIVING FOR LOVED ONES WITH A MENTAL HEALTH DISORDER/ILLNESS

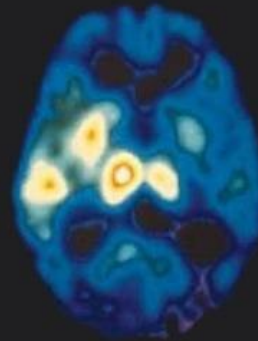
Beverley Francis-Gibson  
2017 Caregiver Conference:  
“The Caregiver Journey, A Universal Voyage”

# BRAIN HEALTH

NO DEPRESSION



DEPRESSION



"GET OVER IT. LOTS OF  
PEOPLE HAVE IT WORSE  
THAN YOU."

DEPRESSION

# BRAIN HEALTH & BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

- ◉ The brain is the most important organ of the body. It is critical to our overall well-being.
- ◉ Like any other organ, the brain can become damaged, sick or disordered.
- ◉ Thoughts, behaviors and moods that can result from mental health disorders can be hard to handle and distressing for individuals experiencing them as well as those who care for them.

# COMMON AGE-RELATED THREATS

- ◉ Alcohol
- ◉ Smoking
- ◉ Poor nutrition/hydration
- ◉ Insufficient sleep
- ◉ Lack of physical activity
- ◉ Heart disease
- ◉ High blood pressure
- ◉ Diabetes
- ◉ Depression
- ◉ Brain injury
- ◉ Stress
- ◉ Certain medications
- ◉ Brain injury

# CONDITIONS THAT ELEVATE RISK

- ◉ Isolation
- ◉ Loss of social support
- ◉ Feelings of helplessness and lack of control over personal situations
- ◉ Chronic illness
- ◉ Poor nutrition
- ◉ Family history of mental illness
- ◉ Hormonal changes
- ◉ Complications of grief
- ◉ Substance misuse and abuse
- ◉ Negative thought patterns
- ◉ Past traumas such as neglect or abuse, domestic violence, accidents
- ◉ Unsafe or unhealthy social conditions such

# WHAT IS MENTAL ILLNESS?

- ◉ A mental disorder/illness can be defined as a health condition that changes a person's thinking, feelings, or behavior (or all three) that causes the person distress and difficulty in functioning.
- ◉ Mental disorders are not part of normal aging. However, advanced age is a risk factor. Many people develop mental health problems for the first time when they are in their later years="late onset."

# COMMON TYPES OF MENTAL ILLNESS

- ◉ Anxiety Disorder: ongoing feeling of worry, distress, fear, unexplained nervousness or a rising sense of dread that something is very wrong.
  - Up to 14 % of older adults meet the criteria for an anxiety disorder
  - Anxiety is highly treatable
- ◉ Panic Disorder: is a type of anxiety disorder where individuals will experience intense episodes of anxiety called panic attacks.
  - Panic disorder sufferers live in fear of having another attached
- ◉ Depression: is a serious and common mood disorder that involves mind, body and behavior. Many people experience their first depressive episode after the age of 65; many are untreated due to the myth that depression is a normal part of aging.
- ◉ Hoarding: involves the accumulation of things coupled with an inability to part from possessions where an individual's living space is no longer functional and may become hazardous.
- ◉ Obsessive-compulsive disorder: persistent and distressing thoughts over which person feels no control.
- ◉ Phobias: type of anxiety where a person has developed a dreaded fear of an object, place or circumstance.

# GENERAL WARNING SIGNS

- ◉ Marked personality change
  - ◉ Difficulty coping with problems and daily activities
  - ◉ Strange or grandiose ideas
  - ◉ Excessive anxieties
  - ◉ Prolonged depression or apathy
  - ◉ Marked changes in eating or sleeping patterns
  - ◉ Extreme mood swings: high or low
  - ◉ Excessive anger, hostility or violent behavior
  - ◉ Abuse of alcohol or drugs
  - ◉ Thinking or talking about suicide or harming oneself
- ❖ Warning: diagnoses need to be made by a clinical professional



# HELPING WITH DEMENTIA

Please note: Dementia is not a normal part of aging. Problems with thinking, memory or judgement are red flags that an older adult needs an evaluation.

\*Warning: diagnoses need to be made by a clinical professional

# 8 TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY WITH DEMENTIA PATIENTS

- ◉ 1. avoid speaking slowly: words get lost before they are comprehended
- ◉ 2. minimize background noise: hearing loss among older people is common
- ◉ 3. start with the main point: “sit here and eat dinner”
- ◉ 4. Nonverbal behavior should match verbal behavior (ex. Walking away while talking

## 8 TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY WITH DEMENTIA PATIENTS (CONTINUED)

- ◉ 5. Eyes to eyes, lips to lips: face to face
- ◉ 6. Keep it concrete: use short, concrete, and direct statements. Vague statements are confusing.
- ◉ 7. Am I making sense? Periodically check and make sure that the listener understand you.
- ◉ 8. Repetition is good: you will hear the same questions, statements often repeated.

# NUMBERS YOU SHOULD KNOW

- One in four adults-approx. 60 million Americans experience mental illness in a given year.
- Approximately 20% of people over age 55 experience some type of mental health concern which may interfere with life activities such as eating well, maintaining a household, sustaining personal relationships, etc.

# DEATH BY SUICIDE

- ◉ The rate of suicide among white males over the age of 85 is more than 4 times higher than the nation's overall rate of suicide.
- ◉ Older men die by suicide at a rate that is 7 times higher than that of older women.
- ◉ Statements like “I can't take this anymore.” “I won't be here much longer.” “You'll be better off without me.” should be taken seriously.

# CAREGIVER DEFINED

A caregiver is anyone who provides help to another person in need.



*“To care for those who once cared for us is one of the highest honors.” – Tia Walker*

# SUPPORTIVE CAREGIVING THINGS YOU CAN DO

- ◉ Active listening
- ◉ Showing concern and support
  - Not helpful: “call me if you need anything”
  - Helpful: “I’ve made a casserole for you, what time should I come by”
- ◉ Express appreciation for your relationship and your intent to be helpful

# SUPPORTIVE CAREGIVING THINGS YOU CAN DO

- ◉ Express respect and appreciation for the loved one's feelings
- ◉ Have conversations in a calm and familiar environment with privacy
- ◉ Offer to assist with next steps if they are ready to get help
- ◉ Instill hope, offer support and \*resources
- ◉ Have a plan ready in case they want to seek help quickly

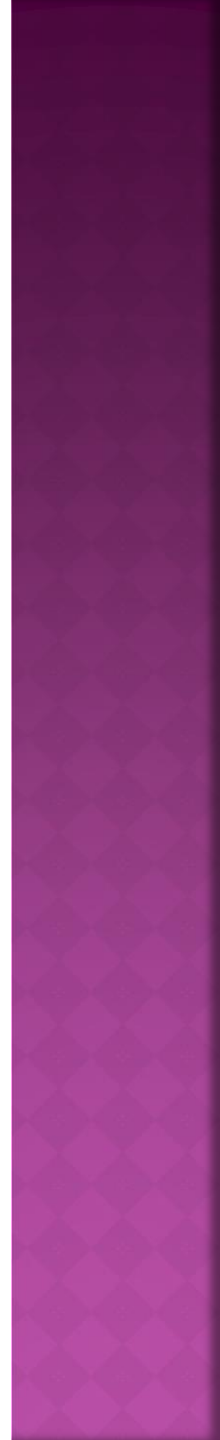


# CAREGIVER STRESS

- ◉ Living with or caring for someone who is dependent on others for help and daily activities is physically, emotionally and mentally challenging job.
- ◉ Stress is a common outcome of the demanding work that caregiving entails
- ◉ Caregivers are at a higher than normal risk for mental health disorders and should develop a plan for self-care and stress management early.

# SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF CAREGIVER STRESS

- ◉ Health problems
- ◉ Fatigue
- ◉ Guilt
- ◉ Insomnia
- ◉ Loss of concentration
- ◉ Irritability
- ◉ Anger
- ◉ Depression
- ◉ Anxiety
- ◉ Denial of problems



# CAREGIVER SELF-CARE PLAN

There is no “one-size-fits-all” self-care plan, but there is a common thread to all self-care plans: making a commitment to attend to all the domains of your life, including your physical and psychological health, emotional and spiritual needs, and relationships.



# SOME OF THE BENEFITS OF SELF-CARE

- ◉ Renewed energy
- ◉ Reducing stress
- ◉ A fresh new perspective towards life, feeling positive
- ◉ Creating feelings of happiness, calm and peace within
- ◉ Feeling healthy and good about your body
- ◉ Increased confidence & self-esteem
- ◉ Increased passion for life & motivation to succeed

# WHAT STEPS CAN I TAKE TODAY TO TAKE CARE OF MYSELF?

## ◉ Physical

- ◉ Go for a walk 3/4 times a week
- ◉ Swimming once a week
- ◉ Drink one extra glass of water a day
- ◉ Eat one extra piece of fruit a day

## ◉ Mental & Emotional

- ◉ Learn to say no when I need to say no
- ◉ Separate work and home life
- ◉ Journal your feelings
- ◉ Talk with a trusted friend or counsellor
- ◉ Take an art or writing class
- ◉ Join a club
- ◉ Keep a gratitude journal

## ◉ Social

- ◉ Meet up with friends once a week
- ◉ Join a class/women's/men's group
- ◉ Date night with partner
- ◉ Family outings

## ◉ Spiritual/Energetic

- ◉ Meditation
- ◉ Reading books on spirituality/healing etc.
- ◉ Spending time in nature
- ◉ Attend faith-based services or programs

## RESPIRE CARE

A respite is a break from something that's difficult or unpleasant.



# MENTAL HEALTH ADVANCE DIRECTIVES

- Under Maryland law, MHADs allow adults with mental illnesses to identify mental health professionals, programs and facilities that the person would prefer to provide their mental health services.
- *MHAD are empowering tools for individuals, family and caregivers in decision making about care needs and preferences.*



# CAREGIVER RESOURCES

- ◉ Howard County on Aging: Caregiver Office
- ◉ Maryland Access Point
- ◉ 50+Centers for programming available
- ◉ NAMI HC: free support groups for family members and caregivers
- ◉ National Center on Elder Abuse
- ◉ Department of Social Services
- ◉ Grassroots Crisis Intervention Center

# CAREGIVER RESOURCES

- ◉ Family Caregiver Alliance
- ◉ National Alliance for Caregiving
- ◉ Alzheimer's & Dementia Caregiver Center
- ◉ Caregiver Action Network
- ◉ ARCH National Respite Network

Questions?

# Contact Information:

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*Thank you!!*